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DEPARTMENT FOR IO/HR, DRL/MLGA, USUN/W, PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2019

TAGS: PHUM PREL PREF NO UN

SUBJECT: NORWAY'S VIEWS ON UNGA THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES

REF: STATE 108921

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Cherrie Daniels for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Poloff discussed reftel priorities with Anne Merchant, the coordinator of Norway's UNGA Third Committee matters in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). While the meeting contained no surprises, Merchant shared her views on how to diminish bloc-voting in the Third Committee. In addition to opposing no-action motions and the defamation of religion resolution, as well as voting with us on biennial free elections, Iran, Burma, and North Korea (DPRK), Norway asked for our support on their Human Rights Defenders and their Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons resolutions. Norway believes there will be little "wiggle room" on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Poloff met on October 22 with Anne Merchant, Senior Advisor in the MFA Human Rights Section, who coordinates the actions of Norway's representatives in the Third Committee from Oslo for the first few weeks of the Committee's meetings, and then attends in New York from November 9th until the conclusion. Merchant said that Norway would support us on the Iran, Burma, and DPRK resolutions, as usual. She believed all three would pass, as they did last year. On Iran, Merchant said she believed Norway's representative had met with the Canadians to coordinate the division of labor on lobbying other countries. She asked for, and expected, our strong support on the two biennial resolutions which Norway co-sponsors: the Human Rights Defenders resolution and the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons resolution. On the latter, she noted that last time this was tabled, there was friction with the U.S. on the issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC). She hoped and believed friction would be attenuated this time around.

¶3. (C) On the defamation of religion resolution, poloff asked about Norway's views on how the U.S. might work to reduce bloc voting on this and similar issues. Merchant believed the best strategy would be to identify one influential/active country and work closely with it, building confidence, such that that country would be able to provide an "out" for other countries which vote with the bloc merely because the bloc is unbroken. Because Norway is not itself already a member of a bloc (as the EU countries are), Merchant suggested Norway was freer to negotiate and be flexible than some other likeminded countries; she encouraged the USG to work closely with Norway on these issues.

¶4. (C) Merchant responded positively to our desire to join consensus on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),

but said there was not a lot of "wiggle room" on the issue of the CRC being the standard for protection of children's rights.

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